

Chapter Four

JONAH AND THE STORM

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep. So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish." And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Then they said unto him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?" -- for the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me." Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O Lord, do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." So they picked up Jonah, and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and took vows. Jonah 1:4-16.

In the last chapter we looked at Jonah's flight from the presence of the Lord, but we saw that Jonah did not actually believe that he could go somewhere God was not. By fleeing, he was refusing to go to Nineveh and was officially resigning his office as a prophet to Israel. We also looked at the reason that Jonah gave for not wanting to go to Nineveh as given in the first two verses of chapter 4. Jonah simply did not want God to spare Nineveh (1) because of the notorious cruelty they displayed to their captives, and (2) because God had threatened to use Assyria to overthrow his own people, Israel, because of its idolatry and refusal to repent. When Jonah heard that God threatened to destroy Nineveh in forty days, he rejoiced because maybe God would not carry out His threat to destroy Israel. Also, Jonah was fearful that if he preached to Nineveh, they just might repent. He knew that God was such a merciful God, it would be just like Him to withdraw His threat to destroy them. Then repentant Nineveh would

be spared and unrepentant Israel would be destroyed. So Jonah fled from his duties because he reasoned that if he did not warn Nineveh, they would not repent therefore assuring the destruction of Nineveh.

Now we look at the storm that God sent to pursue and to capture his wayward prophet. **"The LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up."** This verse clearly states that the wind came from God. It was not attributed to the elements of nature but to the God of nature who is over all and above all. God has established his laws in nature, but they cannot administer themselves. The Lawgiver administers the elements of nature. God supports, maintains, controls and moves all the forces of nature at His own good pleasure. Even the heathen sailors will eventually acknowledge this in verse 14:

Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You O Lord, have done as it pleased You."

Therefore, we must recognize that the elements of nature are not free radicals running around loose, but are under the direct control of the sovereign hand of God Almighty. In Psalms 148:3-8 we read these words:

Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light! Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD; for He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever; he made a decree which shall not pass away. Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all depths; fire and hail, snow and clouds, stormy wind, fulfilling His word.

All of these things are at the disposal of the Creator God. Look at Psalms 107: 23-26:

Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, They see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens.

There is no question that God raised up this special stormy wind to correct a wayward preacher and to save the City of Nineveh. In fact, the words in verse 4 which are translated **"sent out"** can also be translated "cast out or hurled" and it is translated in other locations. We get the idea that God cast out or hurled a great wind right in Jonah's path. A similar storm recorded in Acts 27:14-28 known as a Euroclydon occurred in Paul's life when he was shipwrecked on his way to Rome.

In verse 5 we see two different reactions to the storm. **"Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the**

ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep."

First, the sailors were afraid, and they recognized something unusual at work. They were well accustomed to this particular body of water, however this was something they had never encountered before. They know something unusual is taking place, so much so that terrified they begin to pray to their individual gods. I make an observation here of human nature. Men, who will not otherwise do so, will pray when they are afraid. This is due to a natural instinct of love of life and is not the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Do not be deceived into thinking that every time your unsaved, worldly friends or relatives start calling for prayer when they are notified of a health problem, that it means the Holy Spirit is working in their life. It is usually just a natural instinct to preserve their own life. Men will pray and request others to pray when they are afraid. Spiritually discerning people should realize that when their friends only pray during these fearful times and will not pray when there is no crises, that these are individuals who have no true respect for the God of heaven and earth. I learned this lesson early in my ministry that every time individuals called upon me to come to their hospital bed to pray for their recovery, they were not convicted over their sin, but just wanted "out" of a bad situation. I soon learned that many of them returned to their evil ways after God showed mercy and restored their health. When the storm passed and their fears were gone, they no longer needed God or the prayers of God's people.

The reaction of the sailors in the face of the storm also tells us that man is basically religious. He recognizes there is a God of some type and that he will worship something that is bigger than himself when he thinks he is no longer in control. Men know there is a God; they just do not know what this God is like. They need special revelation to be able to come to Him. That is why these sailors prayed to their idols in ignorance. They get so serious about this matter that they begin to cast away their possessions, and all of the heavy cargo is taken out and thrown overboard. These actions show us how earthly possessions mean little when one's life is threatened. Whenever you are faced with a life-threatening situation, all your possessions will take on a different dimension. We become very willing to throw them overboard. However, in this case throwing the weight of the cargo overboard will not solve the problem. It was Jonah's weight of moral sin that must be dealt with, and Jonah must be thrown overboard before the storm is going to cease. Sin must be dealt with in the life of the wayward prophet because it is the weight of his own sin that is sinking the ship, not the cargo that is in the ship. In Psalms 38:4 David prays: ***"For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me."***

Where was Jonah while the sailors are frantically trying to keep the ship afloat? He was asleep below deck. There is a very popular teaching that a true believer can so progress into sin that he is no longer troubled about it. This is taught particularly in contemporary Baptist circles today. In other words, some believe that a true believer can so backslide and progress into sin that he is no longer troubled about it. The proponents of this are quick to point out

that Jonah's sleep represented spiritual apathy and indifference. That is, while the ship is going down Jonah is so backslidden or so sound asleep that he has no concern as to what is transpiring. One commentator describes Jonah as he was sailing out of the harbor of Joppa standing on the ship board and waving with a big smile on his face, rejoicing to be leaving his native land of birth and believing that his plan was apparently going to succeed. I take a different position. I believe that Jonah's sleep was a sleep of sorrow, not a sleep of apathy. Jonah's sleep reflects the result of two things, physical exhaustion from the journey on land that it took to get him to the seaport and the emotional depression from having to leave his native land which he loved and losing the approval of the God whom he served. An example of "sleep from sorrow" can be found in Luke 22:45. This is during Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. **"When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow."** The disciples were asleep. What was it that brought about their exhaustion? It was the sorrow of all the recent events that had occurred and in which they found themselves in the middle. I maintain that this same kind of exhaustion was taking place in the life of Jonah. Let us be careful to give Jonah the benefit of a doubt in judging his actions considering there is no statement to the contrary. May I exhort you to think the best about people rather than the worst until the worst is confirmed. Give people the benefit of a doubt lest we fall into the category of judging others and forming wrong opinions about people and circumstances when we do not know all the facts.

Also, when a person is convicted over sin, he normally becomes very silent and desires to be alone rather than around people. I have observed in my own pastoral experience, that when God begins to convict a person about his sin and there is a struggle going on, that person becomes very reclusive and silent and wants to be by himself. I believe Jonah sought out a secret place to sleep in his sorrow and did not want to talk to anybody about what he was doing. Therefore, while all the others are up on the deck, he is cut off from them and is down below deck exhausted over the incidents that have occurred in his life.

Go back again to verse 6 of our text: **"So the captain came to him, and said to him, 'What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.'"** Jonah is awakened and rebuked by a heathen ship captain at a time when Jonah should be rebuking the king of Nineveh saying forty days and your whole city will be destroyed. Instead he finds himself being rebuked by a heathen sea captain. He is awakened, called a sleepy head and chided for his apparent disregard for human life. He was asked, "How can you be asleep when we are about to die?" In God's moral government we will always reap what we sow. Jonah refused to reprove the heathen so the heathen reprove and rebuke him. We will reap what we sow. That will be a fact that will follow you until the end

of this life. Also, we can learn from this that the world loves to find out the faults of believers. You may have heard someone say, "I have known that person for years and I would never have known that he was a Christian." The world loves to find fault in the lives of those who profess to know God. The sad thing is many times they have a good opportunity to do so.

In verse 7, Jonah's number comes up: **"And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah."** The sailors reasoned that someone had obviously committed a terrible wrong and had angered his God. They wanted to find out the guilty one in order to appease this unknown God so He would still the wrath of the storm. They did so by the casting of lots. The drawing of numbers out of a bowl or such activity has frequently been used to determine a certain outcome. While it is used on occasions by the superstitious and unlearned, we find in the Bible where the practice was used on occasion to determine the will of God. This practice should only be used guardedly. St. Augustine says it should only be used *"when there is no apparent reason why in any advantage of disadvantage one should be preferred to another."* For example, if you have narrowed down a choice of two equally qualified men to serve as deacons in your church, but there is only one office available, St. Augustine says this would be a time to draw lots. Everything else being equal, then whichever one straw or number comes up we would determine that is the one God has chosen as deacon. This is the way they dealt with the replacement of Judas in the book of Acts. They narrowed the choices down to two, and then they cast lots and Matthias was the one whose lot came up. (Acts 1:26).

Proverbs 16:33 says: **"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."** God even used the superstitious acts of these sailors to mark out his wayward prophet. Whatever comes to pass, men cast the lots but the outcome is ordained by the Lord. So the lot falls upon Jonah, his number is up, and he has to begin to face the consequences.

In verse 8 Jonah encounters the restraining common grace of God.

Then said they to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

If you have any knowledge about the life of sailors, you will know that they are not the most gentle people. Sailors are known as rough people. These sailors have already lost all of their cargo, which means they have lost any profit they might have earned on this ship. They had to throw everything overboard in an effort to keep the ship afloat. What do you think would be the common reaction of the sailors when they discovered Jonah was the guilty one?

Only the restraining common grace of God would keep a group of sailors from immediately throwing Jonah overboard. He had cost them economic loss and was now exposing them to the very loss of their lives. The loss of money and life can turn a group of people into an unruly mob. All that these fellows had invested in this trip had now gone overboard, and the lot has revealed that Jonah is the cause of it.

God not only has a special grace that was achieved through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the atoning work of Christ has also purchased common grace. If it were not for that, we would experience hell here on earth. The purpose of common grace is not to save, but to restrain evil and to make a display of the general goodness of God to His creatures. It is here that this common grace is enacted and restrains the sailors from doing what their natures would have otherwise been prone to do and that would be to immediately throw this guy overboard. But the ship captain insures that Jonah gets a fair trial. Jonah is asked what he does for a living and what is the nature of his business. They also asked him what was his country of citizenship and what race does he belong to. In other words, the captain is insuring that before a death sentence is pronounced there will be a fair hearing and he would restrain his crew from turning into a vigilant mob. The winds are indicating there is a guilty person on board but before we take action, we want to hear his side of the matter.

In verses 9 and 10 we come to Jonah's confession:

So he said to them, "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Many times in Hebrew practice the latter statement in the verse actually precedes the first statement and probably what is meant here is this. Jonah confesses his guilt by saying "I am a Hebrew who fears the God of heaven and earth, and I am running away from my duty." The significance of Jonah's confession about being a Hebrew distinguished Jonah's God from the idols of the Gentiles. When God called Abraham, a descendent of Eber, out of Ur of the Chaldeans and its idolatry, He revealed to Abraham His superiority over all idols. It is interesting that Jonah did not say, "I am an Israelite." He said "***I am a Hebrew.***" I suggest the reason he did so is that the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom were engrossed in idolatry at that time. But to be a Hebrew meant that you confessed there was only one God, the supreme being who created all things.

After Jonah identified himself, he stated, "***I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who***

made the sea and the dry land." He tells them that he worships the God who created this very sea whose waves right now were filling the ship and threatening to send all of them to a watery grave. They respond, "If you worship a God like that, why have you done this?" How inconsistent God's people are! We confess that we believe in an absolute Sovereign God and then we live as if we can control Him. The sailors questioned, "Jonah, did you really think that you could frustrate the purpose of the God who created you? Why have you done this?"

Jonah is now convicted on the testimony of three witnesses. The Bible says let everything be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6). What are the three witnesses that will convict Jonah? The first witness was the wind. It was blowing, and Jonah says it was after him. The second witness was the lot that was cast and fell on Jonah. The third witness was his own personal testimony in verse 10 when he confessed, "I am the one that God is after." Jonah has confessed, he is convicted and now he is going to experience the consequences.

In verses 10 and 11 let us look at the sailors' fear of God:

Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD because he had told them. Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm for us?" For the sea was growing more tempestuous.

Notice the words "**exceedingly afraid.**" Before they were afraid, but now they are nearly out of their minds. Why are they more fearful than they were moments before Jonah makes his confession? The storm is just as bad, it has not eased or become more violent, but now the sailors are exceedingly afraid. The reason is, they have been introduced to the One who controls the seas. Now they know that they are in the hands of the One who created the heavens and the earth and all things that are therein. They are at the mercy of the One who controls the movements of the wind and the water. And if God was so angry about just one sin on the part of His prophet, what would this God be toward them who were filled with sin?

I Peter 4:17-18 says:

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, (that is believers) what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?

The sailors are fearful because they reason if the storm is an example of God taking out all of His anger upon one of his own righteous prophets, what will He do toward us who

do not even know Him, love Him or do not even profess to acknowledge His sovereignty or lordship. If He is doing this to one of His own, what will He do to us? Think about that if you are without Christ. If believers scarcely be saved, we might say by the skin of their teeth, what will be the destiny of unbelievers and the ungodly?

The sailors have a hard decision to make. Now that they have identified Jonah and he has confessed, what shall they do with Jonah to calm the sea? The sea was tempestuous and the sea billows continued to roll. We need to learn a lesson here that confession of one's own sin does not always mean that things will immediately ease up. If you have fallen into sin and you have confessed your sins, you cannot presume that the storm will let up the moment you confess. God's justice must be appeased and His purpose accomplished before the storm will cease. Your repentance and faith are not meritorious acts in and of themselves. There must be an appeasement and that appeasement of God comes through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is your repentance and faith that the Holy Spirit works in you to give you access unto the Father through the meritorious works of Jesus Christ. It is not your faith or your repentance that appeases God. It is only the atoning work of Christ that appeases God. So remember Christian, that if you fall into sin and God finally brings you to the point that you confess, do not immediately assume that God is going to lift the punishment or the chastisement off. It may continue for some days and weeks, even years until God has determined it is the appropriate time for the storm to cease.

The sailors have a hard decision to make, and that is what to do with this man? Verse 12:

And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

Jonah told them that he was the only person that would appease the wrath of God. He said, "I must go into the sea before the storm is going to cease." By that statement Jonah confessed that his will was defeated and God's will had won. Jonah is now ready to give up so he will not be going to Tarshish after all. He said, "***Pick me up and throw me into the sea.***" This was a sign of true repentance on Jonah's part. It is an evidence of true Biblical repentance when Jonah puts God's glory and the honor and safety of others ahead of his own will and desires.

Jonah realized that his actions endangered others around about him when he said, "***This great tempest is come upon you for my sake.***" When we sin willfully, we have no idea what the far-reaching consequences of that action may be. It may spread over into the lives of our family. Fathers, when you willfully sin against God as David did, your child, like

David's, may be stricken by God and die. Wives, if you are a child of God, and you should run away from Him, God may take your husband and leave you a widow. These are not just scare tactics, but this is factual truth. Children may suffer, or marriage mates may suffer when a Christian runs away from the known will of God Almighty. Just as there was an Achan in the camp of Israel that held up the progress of the journey into the land, a Christian out of the will of God in a local church can impede the spiritual progress of God's moving until that individual is exposed, confesses and gets things right with God. You don't know how far reaching your willful sin may go to. It may not only affect your family members, it may affect your pastor, and the very church people that you love in the Lord. If there is an Achan in the camp, he must be found out. In this case, there is a Jonah in the ship. Jonah now recognizes it and insists that he has to go overboard.

Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." Verses 13 and 14

Here we see the sympathy and the kindness of these sailors. It is amazing kindness coming from a group of hardened sailors. Instead of immediately throwing Jonah overboard, they said, "let us try to row to safety one more time so that we do not have to see this man perish." They rowed hard in an effort to bring the boat to land. We need to learn and apply a lesson from the sailors. We should be tenderhearted to those who are overtaken in a fault and humbled by it. Jonah was humbled and confessed, "I did wrong." It ought to be the practice of good people to show kindness toward those who repent and are humbled by their sin. We should not maintain a harsh attitude toward repentant sinners. There is also in this a practical lesson for repentant sinners. The more humble and sorry we become over our wrongs, the more likely we will find pity and sympathy from those whom we have wronged. When others are mad at you because you have wronged them, and you try to justify your position, what kind of response do you get? However, if you go brokenhearted with tears and an attitude of humility, in most cases a spirit of forgiveness and kindness will be shown towards you.

Here was a group of heathen sailors desiring to see Jonah spared while Jonah was unwilling to see the heathens in Nineveh spared. These heathens were more merciful than the preacher. Jonah's conscience should have been pricked by the mercy exhibited by the sailors. They did not want to throw Jonah overboard to get themselves in more trouble with the God of the seas for taking the life of one of His prophets. So they petitioned God that He

might not judge them for what they had to do. Notice that there is a change taking place in the lives of these men. Look at the latter part of verse 14: **"For You O LORD, have done as it pleased You."** What a confession of faith! The heathen sailors were confessing the sovereign character of God and were turning from their idols to the true and living God.

"So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging." Why would God insist on this to be done? Why didn't He just discipline Jonah in some way without casting him forth into the sea? The Lord is making an example out of Jonah. He is saying, "Do not trifle with my commands - I mean business." **"Be not deceived, God is not mocked."** (Galatians 6:7) We cannot trifle with the commands of God. God means business and He is preaching a sermon to these heathen sailors by introducing Himself to them through His dealings with Jonah, leading to their conversion. In essence God is saying, "If you are going to follow me, be ready to do whatever I tell you to do. Do not trifle with me. Here is what I am doing to one of my own prophets who refused to obey one of my commands."

Upon Jonah being cast forth, the sea ceases from her raging. God is the master of the waves as well as human nature. God can stir up the sea and calm the sea at His own time and at His own pleasing. Look at Psalm 107: 23-31 and compare it to Jonah and the sailors in this experience in the storm:

Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble. (Speaking of human beings here) They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry to the LORD in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet; so he guides them to their desired haven. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!

Does this sound like Jonah's experience, and likewise the experience of the sailors? Do you think these sailors learned something on this voyage they had never learned before? Absolutely! They saw the work of the Creator God and His providential control of that which He had created.

In verse 16, a revival meeting breaks out on board the ship. **"Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly."** Before this they were only afraid of the storm, but now they were

“exceedingly” afraid of the God who was in control of the storm. They offered a sacrifice unto the Lord and made vows. This fear is not the fright which they originally demonstrated but is a spiritual and a religious fear for **“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”** (Psalms 111:10) This is not a fear of punishment but it is a reverential fear or a godly fear confessed by Jonah in verse 9. **“He said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD.”** In other words, Jonah is confessing that there is a Creator who was the Lord of his life. This was his confession of faith. John Calvin questions whether these men were actually saved. However, John Gill is of the opinion they were saved, and I agree with Dr. John Gill in this instance. Gill states in his *Commentary on Jonah*,

If these men were truly converted as it seems as if they were, they were great gainers by this providence. For though they lost their worldly goods they found what was infinitely better. God. To be their God and their portion. And all spiritual good things with him and it may be observed of the wise and wonderful providence of God that though Jonah refused to go and preach to the Gentiles at Nineveh for which he was corrected, yet God made this dispensation a means of converting the Gentiles.

In essence, Gill is saying that this disobedient preacher was the cause of a revival meeting. What a concept! Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to preach because he did not want to see them saved. In running away he becomes the very instrument of God in saving the sailors on the ship. If those fellows were here today to give their testimony, they would thank God for a wayward preacher who got out of God’s will. God can even take the sins of men and work them out for His own plans and purposes.

Another sign of the sailors’ conversion was that they offered a sacrifice to the Lord. A sacrifice was a symbolic representation of how God is reconciled to men. They made this sacrifice not unto their heathen gods, but unto the Lord. Then they made vows that God would be their God and they would be His servants. They feared the Lord (the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom).

Now I must stop the exposition of the word here, and if you will allow me, give you some Gablesology and introduce some inquisitiveness that the text doesn’t clearly bring out. I believe that the set of circumstances would allow this proposal to fit in.

The Scriptures do not tell us, but one wonders what the next move of these sailors was after this life changing experience. What can we speculate that they did after it was all over? Jonah is gone in the depth of the sea. What do you think the sailors did? They certainly could not have proceeded on their voyage to Tarshish because they had already lost all of their cargo in verse 5. The ship was probably heavily damaged as seen in verse 4. One may justly presume that they would

return back to Joppa to report on what has happened, and make new preparations for their future lives. What a strange report this group of sailors would have to carry back to the seaport of Joppa! They might have said, "You are not going to believe this!" In the midst of the hustle and bustle of the seaport, here comes this crippled ship limping back into the harbor and all these men are getting off. What do you think is going on out there? Is it possible they said, "Sit down, you are not going to believe what happened to us." I wonder if they actually saw the fish appear, and Jonah go right into its huge mouth. Also, I can't help but wonder how soon and how far the story spread about Jonah. For this is a seaport, and another ship and its seamen are going to take this story to other ports. They might have said, "Hey, let me tell you about what happened down at Joppa." Then as the people land at Joppa, they begin to make their way eastward over through Palestine into Nineveh. Again the report goes forth, "You are not going to believe what we heard! There is a God in Israel who is about ready to destroy all of you people!" Remember that Jonah will be in the big fish for three days and nights, and then he is going to be cast out onto the shore. It is going to have to be that shore line of Israel here close into the proximity if you look on your map and see where you are going to end up at and then from there he is going to have to start encountering people, making his way toward Nineveh. It is going to take a long time to do that if you see how far Nineveh is away from Joppa.

I wonder if it were possible that by word of mouth the story of Jonah reached Nineveh before Jonah ever arrived on the scene. Remember Jesus says, "As Jonah was a sign unto Nineveh, so I am going to be a sign to this generation." If it is possible that the people of Nineveh had heard of the story about Jonah, this prophet is going to walk into that city and not have to do a lot of stomping and hollering or using emotions to get people to repent. For some strange reason when this hard sin-calloused city hears Jonah say, "Let us all bow down to this God who can do what He says He can do" the people repented. How do you suppose they knew that if the message of Jonah did not precede the appearing of Jonah on the scene. I close with this exhortation. Don't ever think that you are escaping from the commands of a moral God. This is the lesson we all need to learn. Don't ever think that if you are living in known unconfessed sin, that just because the sun is still shining, you think you are escaping from the moral commands of a holy God. If you are here without Christ, God will catch up to you. You had better hope and pray that He catches you in this life. You may get through this life without judgment, because the scriptures say that some men's sins will be exposed beforehand and others at the Day of Judgment. God will catch up with all his disobedient moral creatures, and if you die outside of Christ, it will be the judgment day, but you will be caught. If you are here as a Christian and you are trying to live a wayward life, a life of known disobedience to the revealed commands and teachings of God's Word, don't think that you are getting by with it. There is a wind being prepared, there is a fish being prepared, and there will be some torment and turmoil come to pass in your life. It may even break over into the lives of friends and neighbors and church

members. We cannot escape God. God has the ability to use not only the winds and the waves, but in order to bring you to repentance, He has the ability to use a plant in such a way that He can give you food poisoning and make you so sick at your stomach that you will be willing to die. He can take a biological composition and bring about cancer in your body to bring you to the place where He will have you to be. He can use the sting of a bee to paralyze you. My friend, the God of heaven and earth has a treasure, a resource of material, that he can use to bring His wayward people to the place where they will do His will. Do it today. Jonah arise and go to Nineveh. Let us pray.